DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 300 FL 008 630

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TITLE Romanian Testing Principles and Practices: A Review of Available Literature Concerning the Use of Objective Tests of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 52p.; Report prepared for the Summer Institute in Linguistics for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. June-August 1976) ; Some figures and tables may be marginally legible

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Achievement Tests; College Students; Educational Testing; *English (Second Language); High School Students; Language Instruction; *Language Tests; *Literature Reviews; *Objective Tests; Second Language Learning; *Standardized Tests; Statistical Analysis; *Testing; Testing Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Rumania

ABSTRACT

As part of the current trend toward adopting modern, objective-standardized test methods in evaluating the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the schools of the Socialist Republic of Romania, this review of pedagogical literature makes available to the English-reading audience information that has appeared in Romanian materials. The traditional testing system used in Romania is described and evaluated, with special attention to EFL testing at all educational levels, as reported in major journals and a few unpublished documents. At the request of Romanian educational officials, an experiment was carried out using an American-made objective-standardized EFL test upon a population of 201 Romanian students of English. Subjects represented three levels: 12th graders, university freshmen, and university juniors. The conditions of the experiment as well as the basic statistical information the tests yielded are described. Finally, general guidelines for a grounded theory of objective testing of EFL in Romania are suggested. (Author/CFM)

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ROMANIAN TESTING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES: A REVIEW OF AVAILABLE LITERATURE CONCERNING THE USE OF OBJECTIVE TESTS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)

A Report

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June-August 1976

FL008630

ABSTRACT

As part of the current trend toward adopting modern, objective-standardized test methods in evaluating the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the schools of the Socialist Republic of Romania, this review of pedagogical literature makes available to the English-reading audience information that has appeared in Romanian materials. It describes and evaluates the traditional testing system used in Romania, with special attention to EFL testing at all educational levels, as reported in major journals and a few unpublished documents. The review aims to detail the background against which its author was invited by Romanian educational officials to run a testing experiment using an American-made objective-standarized EFL test upon a population of 201 Romanian students of English. Subjects represented three levels: 12th graders, university freshmen, and university juniors. The review describes the conditions of the experiment as well as the basic statistical information the tests yielded (e.g., Pearson r, interpretative recommendations based on published norms, etc.). Finally, the review suggests general guidelines for a grounded theory of objective testing of EFL in Romania.

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ROMANIAN TESTING PRINCIPLES AND METHODS: A REVIEW OF AVAILABLE LITERATURE CONCERNING THE USE OF OBJECTIVE TESTS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)

In the educational system of the Socialist Republic of Romania a pupil takes periodic oral and written tests as a part of the usual structure of lessons in most subject areas. As he passes from one major educational stage to the next, the pupil undergoes his principal examinations in selected subjects. (See Figure 1, a schematic design of the current Romanian school system.) The nature of these various tests, as described in all available literature, will be the subject of the first section of this report. Subsequent sections will outline current trends in testing English as a foreign language at all educational levels. The final part will briefly describe the results of the administration of an American-made standardized objective test of EFL to 201 Romanian students of English in the spring of 1975.

I. General Attitudes Toward Educational Testing

Both the theory and practice of educational measurement today in Romania follow the traditional European model in which "student achievement is evaluated on the basis of classroom performance, on results of periodic oral and written examinations, and on general behavior. The latter is particularly stressed in the Communist world where conformity, discipline, and obedience are highly valued." (Braham 1972, p. 61)

In recent years, Romanian testing specialists and some teach-

ers have carried on a debate concerning types of examinations and have even experimented on a limited scale with "objective" tests in hopes of improving the validity and reliability of educational measures. (Cerchez and Cerchez 1976; Noveanu 1976; Bejenaru 1975; Zetu 1975) Meanwhile, most practicing classroom teachers continue to determine student progress on the basis of rather impressionistic measures, both in the daily evaluation of individual oral recitations in class, homework assignments, occasional extemporaneous quizzes, and periodic formal written examinations, as well as on the occasion of a student's attempt at the maturity or baccalaureate examination, required of those who wish to pursue higher education. (Braham 1963, p. 63)

The major academic examinations that face students include the baccalaureate examination at the completion of the elementary-secondary cycle of studies, the competitive admissions examination into higher education, for those who do not enter the labor force, and the diploma examination upon the completion of the last year of post-secondary education. (Braham 1972, pp. 61-62, 95-96) Since these milestone examinations follow the pattern of evaluation described in the previous paragraph as the typical method of classroom testing, they tend to reinforce traditional testing methods because lower-grade teachers wish to prepare their pupils for future evaluations as much in examination protocol as in material. (See, for instance, Ministerul Invatamintului 1971, p. 85, for an outline of the testing formula used in the university admissions examination for summer 1971.) University in-

structors, too, tend to use a combination of impromptu oral recitations or translations and periodic written papers (usually on literary or interpretative topics for those majoring in English) as the basis of the marks they give students.

Indeed, the established system of testing virtually every subject by a teacher-devised combination of oral and written questions is so ingrained that university panels whose job is to screen candidates for admission into specific fields imitate the examination style of the elementary and secondary schools while sometimes complaining that such non-objective, non-standardized procedures cannot provide reliable evidence about which of the multitude of candidates are best qualified to fill the governmentally limited number of places in each university faculty. (Zetu 1975; Bancila and Chitoran 1972) Although most persons concerned with educational evaluation agree that the development of objective tests would be useful at all levels and for all disciplines (with the exception, perhaps, of art), the grip of tradition is strong. Even those who advocate standardized and objective measures of achievement for classroom evaluation of pupils and for university admissions procedures often include very subjective measures under the rubric of "objective testing." (See Section VI, below.)

II. Testing Trends in English as a Foreign Language

Testing principles and practices in English as a foreign language to a large extent reflect these mainstream Romanian

attitudes toward objective tests.

For instance, in a recent teacher's guide for use in the teaching of English at the General School level (ages 6-15)--a text authorized by the Romanian Ministry of Education--the authors recommend traditional extemporaneous oral questioning in class, dictation, retelling of the textbook assignment, and translation as forms of "objective testing." Admittedly, the authors worry aloud about the pitfalls of translation, but beyond a cautionary note to the teacher and practice-teacher they offer no guidance in how to evaluate translation so that validity and reliability of the measure are achieved. They write, "Translation must be used with care; the sentences to be translated must involve a specific problem of grammar or vocabulary, and avoid literary difficulties and structures that have not been practiced with the pupils." (Galateanu and Comisel 1975, pp. 130-131)

My own observation of over a hundred Romanian classroom teachers of English indicates that the great majority do not follow this cautionary note but evaluate translation exercises, in particular, and recitation drills, in general, by unspecified and widely varying standards. Frequently, "literary appreciation" norms become the standard of measurement in what is supposed to be a grammar, vocabulary or speaking test. In other words, if in recitation a pupil can parrot literary notions expressed in the text or offer an original evaluative comment (perhaps in Romanian), he is likely to do well. (Bejenaru, 1975) Such an

approach to classroom testing is understandable since teachers tend to perpetuate the style of testing which they experienced as students from the elementary to the university levels. Furthermore, the training teachers receive in pedagogy emphasizes an elaborate pattern of lesson plans but is very sketchy about the various types of testing procedures that might be suitable for the lessons. It seems taken for granted that teachers will intuitively know how to test and that only general guidelines need be mentioned. A widely used pedagogical handbook outlines the steps of testing as follows: (1) announce the topic and scope of the test, (2) administer the test, (3) evaluate the results of the test, and (4) give the next homework assignment. (Salade and Munteanu, 1971) The application of these steps is not developed at length.

III. Two Impressionistic Experiments in Testing EFL at the Elementary School Level

Two experiments that involved EFL but did not use reliable instruments for evaluating their results are documented in the literature.

Oprica's (1975) experiment with English teaching methods in the first grade reports no measure other than a general impression that (a) kindergarten pupils who have studied any foreign language are more receptive to foreign language instruction in first grade than are those who did not; (b) the use of direct-method/situation-context training is more suitable for pupils ages 6-7 than are other instructional methods; and (c), as a corollary of (a), if

foreign language training begins early and continues uninterrupted through all subsequent school years, the necessary conditions to produce functional bilinguals will obtain.

Although Oprica's project was done on a massive scale--500 first grade pupils in two schools--the experiment as reported seems replete with methodological faults: Each teacher was directed to use whatever techniques seemed to him best suited to the occasion. Oprica reports that by rough classification all the techniques employed were either those of the direct method or audio-lingual approach. Classes were to be taught about a total of 200 English words related to concepts they already knew in their mother tongue - e.g. time, location, colors, etc. Although not specified, the gauge used to measure the hypothesis that background in any foreign language makes further foreign language learning easier seems to have been the percentage of English terms assimilated by pupils with the background as compared to the percentage used by pupils without such prior training. Both groups experienced similar treatment in an attempt to get at psycholinguistic underpinnings to child acquisition of a second language.

In an earlier experiment to evaluate the effect of using the oral/aural method of teaching English to elementary pupils in the first through fourth grades, Dumitrescu and Galateanu (1970) are not at all clear about how they tested the effectiveness of the new treatment. Both agree that their separate experiments indicate the suitability of using audio-lingual tech-

niques in place of traditional grammar-translation ones for young learners of English, but Dumitrescu discusses only the pattern of drills she employed while Galateanu is more pointed about testing but only slightly more informative about the conditions of evaluation.

At the start of the experiment, Galateanu established two pupil groups--one taught by the experimental oral/aural method, the other by traditional techniques--and at the end of the year she administered identical tests to the two groups for comparison: The first test required pupils to perform some action when given a command in English (to test listening comprehension); in order to test speaking the second required pupils to orally describe some pictures--the pictures are not specified in the report; the third and fourth tests required pupils to read aloud and then to take down dictation from a familiar text; in the final test pupils had to translate a passage from Romanian into English and another passage from English into Romanian.

Galateanu does not explain how she evaluated each performance, but she concludes that the experimental group did better on the command, description and reading tests and the control group excelled on taking dictation and doing translation. Galateanu seems surprised and pleased by the results, without realizing that the two groups simply did better on those tasks which they had studied.

IV. The Silva Experiment in Objective Testing of EFL on the Secondary School Level

When Silva (1973) elaborated an EFL achievement test following some suggestions regarding objective test format from Lado (1961) and Harris (1969), the result demonstrated both her misunderstanding of objective tests and her underlying concern for testing some matters extraneous to language skills. Silva's experiment, the only reported extensive use of an objective test of EFL in Romania, exemplifies the low degree to which valid and reliable measures have been adapted to Romanian classroom testing.

A. The Experimental Design

During the first and second trimesters of the 1971-72 academic year Silva administered four brief multiple-choice style tests to young subjects who belonged to two 9th grade elementary English classes in the same lyceum for construction workers in Bucharest. Test dates were in October and November 1971 and February and March 1972. At one point in her report Silva says there were 60 subjects, yet later she reports data on only 40--one class of 29, the other of 11.

Silva set her experimental goals in the form of five questions:

(1) What exactly should be tested?

(2) How should it be tested?

(3) How can the objectives of the school syllabus be reconciled with an objective test?

(4) How might the pupils be psychologically prepared for the test?

(5) How will the test be structured?

In an analysis of the types of errors each pupil had made on a traditional written translation pretest and on a series of earlier oral recitations, Silva categorized the mistakes using Harris' (1969, p. 11) chart of language skills and components. These error types were then used as the basis of constructing four ten-item multiple-choice tests.

The only test in the series that Silva describes was constructed in the following manner: After reviewing material in two British texts (Hornby 1966 and Alexander 1970) and in the two chapters of the pupils' textbook which in her opinion treated specific problems that occurred in the pretest, Silva devised a ten-item multiple-choice test covering verb forms (modality, aspect, interrogative-negative, and past tense) and vocabulary types (numerals, names of days, and prepositional units). Taking into consideration all she had analyzed and preliminary pupil reaction to participating in a non-traditional testing experiment--they were enthusiastic, she reports--Silva alloted 100 points to the test: 13 points each to the 6 verb structure items and 5 to 7 points to the 4 vocabulary questions.

Before administering this test to the subjects, Silva spent considerable time familiarizing them with the format of a multiple-choice test. She says that she modeled the new-style test question

by writing the following item on the board: (The "correct" answer is underscored.)

When the teacher comes in the pupils

1. Stand up
2. Sit down
3. Don't care

The pupils were given ten minutes to take each test in the series. During the remainder of the hour, the pupils were asked to check their answers and "typical grammatical errors" were explained on the board with what Silva calls "different structural exercises."

The principal conclusions which Silva draws from the experiment include the following:

(a) The tests are maximally economical in the time it takes to check knowledge and to determine "objective grades for a large number of pupils;"

(b) The tests stimulate weak students to be prompt and to persevere in their studies;

(c) The tests are accepted by the pupils as a normal part of the process of the lesson;

(d) Errors diminish in successive administrations of the tests;

(e) The tests stimulate independent pupil activity and creativity in class work;

(f) The tests are new, efficient and logical, and they increase the efficient assimilation of a foreign language;

(g) The tests do not require special efforts and, from a technical point of view, are easy to construct.

B. Observations on the Test Design

Silva's honest attempt to develop a series of objective tests of EFL is seriously flawed by a basic misunderstanding or lack of awareness of content validity, test reliability and pre-test and control group criteria. The fact that levels of difficulty, discrimination and point value for each item were determined before each test was administered (on the basis of errors pupils made on quite divergent translation and recitation pretests) suggests the degree of confusion about item analysis built into the test.

Needless to say, besides being more a test of comportment in Romanian society than a test of the English language, the item used to familiarize pupils with the multiple-choice type question is a poor one since each choice can be defended on syntactic and semantic grounds. Nevertheless, Silva argues that a test constructed of such items, among other things, "permits the most objective grading possible." (p. 70) Furthermore, many of the ten items used on the verb/vocabulary test also contain similar construction problems. For instance, the following items are typical . Item format is Silva's:

You finished your lessons; now you ____ go to the cinema.	1. can 2. <u>may</u> 3. do
What time is it?	1. <u>a quarter to four</u> 2. twenty to three 3. twenty to two

What is the third day of the week?	1. Tuesday 2. Thursday 3. Wednesday

Although in her conclusions Silva claims that the results of later tests show students to be getting better in English, given these types of questions (so arbitrary or obvious in their answers), one wonders how valid or reliable Silva's findings are. The fact that so few items are used to cover such a broad range of grammatical and lexical concerns is itself enough to raise serious question.

Interestingly, Silva is careful in her report in figuring the percentage of students in each class who missed each test item. (She does not consider how many selected each choice, however.) In one instance she ignores the fact that one question is missed by 79% in one class and by 100% in the other class and she lumps together the scores on this very difficult item with the much better scores on the next two items (all three of which deal with modal verbs), and then concludes that "the structural grammatical elements of the modal form (questions 1, 2, 3) have been assimilated by approximately half of the total pupils." (p. 71) Three items--even well constructed ones--can hardly be an adequate measure of mastery of any point of grammar. One wonders, too, how much of the "Hawthorne effect" was involved in the putative improvement the series of tests shows.

Silva's elaborate preparation of the test format reveals a willingness on the part of some Romanian English teachers to break away from traditional forms of testing. Her conclusions

clearly overstate the case and perhaps may even mislead others into placing false trust in poorly constructed measures--conclusion (g) is especially insidious. (See p. 10, above.)

V. The Experimental Admissions Test at University of Cluj

Silva's confusion about the purposes and requirements of objective testing is common among Romanian English teachers, but it is harder to document. Many assume that a question which asks a pupil to give a short answer or to fill in a blank is ipso facto a good objective item.

In 1974, for instance, the Departments of English and Teaching Methods at the University of Cluj experimented with an "objective test."[1] In it, students were presented with an unidentified 200-word passage from Daniel Defoe's novel Robinson Crusoe and then asked 20 of the following sort of questions. Total test value was set at 128 points:

Item 5. Give the essence of the fragment in 5-6 sentences! (6 points)

_____
_____ (10 lines supplied)

Item 8. What literary trend does this work belong to and why? (3 points)

_____
_____ (4 lines supplied)

---

[1] The results of the experiment were never published. My information about the nature of the test comes from personal communication with its author, Eva Semlyen.

Item 9. Pick out from the text five words containing the [ʌ] sound. Underline the letters by which these sounds are represented! (5 points)

Model: [ʌ] come

_____

___(5 lines supplied)

Item 15. Translate!: I laid wait in this manner for them.

(2 points) _____

Although these items are poor objective questions, they provide rather good examples of the oral recitation style of testing commonly used by classroom teachers to determine a pupil's trimester grade. In fact, the Cluj questions are typical of the script followed in the traditional Romanian oral examination in EFL, both in classroom settings and in university admissions competition. If for a variety of reasons unrelated to his actual command of the material (e.g., illness, distraction, fear) he does poorly in answering the oral questions, a pupil might receive a low or failing mark. (On the Romanian grading scale of 1 to 10, 1 is lowest, 10 highest; 5 is a minimum passing mark on any test at any level.) Or if the examiner is inattentive (a special problem in university admissions examinations when the examining panel might question 50 candidates in one day) or prefers a different sytlistic manner of translation, again the reliability of the test score given is questionable.

In oral testing teachers usually make "holistic" judgments; in any event, it is rarely clear that the examiner is focusing on any particular items of the recitation since pupil responses

are often interspersed with teacher comments on a wide range of phonological, lexical, syntactic, biographical, literary, or critical issues which may suggest themselves during the oral testing. Most examiners with whom I have spoken say that their aim in oral testing is to examine the material of the lessons just studied (an amorphous goal); few have specific strategies for questioning.

VI. Criticism, Defense and Attempted Modifications of Some Traditional Forms of Testing

Romanian texts on methodology of teaching that discuss objective tests as good classroom teaching and evaluation instruments (Semlyen 1967 ; Semlyen and Filimon 1973; Galateanu and Comisel 1975) do not have wide success in getting English teachers to replace or modify the traditional individual oral test (including the verbatim recitation of a memorized portion from the textbook), and to avoid impressionistic judgments about proficienty in English based on a complex of teacher concerns from tone of voice to posture. The trimester mark which each pupil receives continues to be the average of the scores he receives in such recitation opportunities and the grade he receives on a normally loosely defined written paper in which he may be asked to translate a passage, discuss a literary or social theme that was covered in the textbook, or respond to four or five precise questions. (Munteanu 1971, pp. 138-139)

The most serious practical constraint on the use of objective tests in Romanian schools--a constraint which is not written about--is the prohibition on duplicating any unofficial document in more than 10 to 15 copies. Old duplicating machines exist in some schools, but not for regular teacher use. In such circumstances, most teachers are deterred from creating tests that are useful only in multiple copies, since gaining approval from the proper agents (the Ministry of Propaganda) is an involved process, as I personally know. In light of this fact, Silva might be less harshly criticized than others for having only ten items on each of her tests. If she did not apply for bureaucratic approval to use a duplicating machine, she probably typed each test, 6-8 copies at a time.

In reviewing variable measures of student learning, Bejenaru (1975) singles out and criticizes the limitations of the Romanian traditional oral testing methods in the following way:

(1) Pupils tend to recite verbatim from the textbooks.

(2) Teachers tend to create ad hoc questions in a willy-nilly fashion.

(3) There is time to quiz only 3 or 4 pupils per class meeting while the other 30-35 remain passive on-lookers.

(4) Some pupils perform poorly under psychologocal stress when being cross-examined at the board in front of their peers or alone in the unfamiliar surroundings of the teachers' room.

(5) A degree of subjectivity enters the evaluation of oral tests.

Most practical teachers agree with Bejenaru's observations, but because of legal and physical constraints they are not able to experiment with test styles that require individual copies of objective questions for each examinee. Consequently, experimentation with objective tests is for all practical purposes limited to researchers in pedagogy, for whom duplication of materials, while not easy, is less difficult.

Some testing researchers have chosen to experiment with developing better inter-reader reliability for traditional essay-type tests, administered once a term and involving about 5 questions for which pupils are given from 3 to 4 minutes per question to write precise fact-bearing answers from material they have studied. Such an experiment by Cerchez and Cerchez (1976), of course, avoided the constraint of having to have multiple copies of objective tests. It did follow a carefully developed plan in which over a four year period (1971-75) all teachers in an agricultural high school, except for physical education staff, participated. One group of teachers was trained to read and grade pupil essays (given two times each year) by a discrete-point scale developed jointly by the researchers and the teachers. The other group of teacher-readers evaluated the same essays (which were anonymously coded) by the traditional "holistic" method Romanian instructors use. Each essay was reviewed independently by 2 or 3 readers from each group, and group composite grades were established by averaging the separate marks. By correlating the two sets of

grades on 2,162 written tests, Cerchez and Cerchez found that it is possible to trace a pupil's academic progress more carefully by a less impressionistic, more systematic method of evaluation, but they hasten to say that both forms of grading are necessary since some aspects of progress are hard to quantify. Cerchez and Cerchez do not indicate if English was taught in the school where the experiment occurred.

An experiment related to Cerchez and Cerchez's is reported by Simionescu (1975). In this case themes written on Romanian literary topics were graded by a discrete-point system, and although Simionescu is sketchy about how many readers considered each essay (she only refers to "teacher" in the singular), she reports that on the whole there is a stong correlation between the scores pupils said they thought they would earn and the marks the essays were given. Like Cerchez and Cerchez, Simionescu argues that both precise and "holistic" grading should be done in Romanian schools since written work represents mastery of distinct skills (e.g., punctuation, organization, handwriting) and the integration of these skills. The theme topics and the discrete-point scale Simionescu uses reveal her research design :

For a freshman class at a high school for training elementary school teachers, Simionescu designated the topic "Sadoveanu: Famous Writer of Our Nation"; for the sophomore class in the same school the topic was "Folklore: Fountain of Inspiration in the Works of Mihail Eminescu"; and for the senior class the assigned

subject was "George Calinescu: Historian and Literary Critic." All essay were to be written in Romanian.

A grading scale was devised to agree with the usual 10-point one used in Romanian schools. The specific areas used in evaluation were: (a) handling of content--0 to 5 points; (b) ability to synthesize and identify major issues--0 to 1 point; (c) organization--0 to 1 point; (d) style, orthography and physical appearance--0 to 2 points; (e) personal writing style, imagination and unusual sensitivity--0 to 1 point. As is obvious from the issues singled out for grading, a good deal of attention was given to matters of style and literary perception. These same concerns dominate the judgment of many EFL teachers who test through written assignments.

There are no reported cases of any attempt to standardize the marking of written papers in EFL classes. However, some sense of the practice of essay marking can be gained from the writings by Levitchi (1971, 1972, 1973a, 1973b, 1975), who advocates extensive use of translation in teaching and testing EFL and who exerts a profound influence upon the state of English studies in Romania.

Teachers at every level of instruction use "the Levitchi style," consciously or unconsciously, by frequently employing grammar-translation methods in evaluating student performance even in what are presumed to be language classes. Experiments such as those of Dumitrescu and Galateanu, described above, and descrip-

tions of experiments in modified audio-lingual methods such as given by Semlyen and Dragos (1971) are intended more to counterbalance these pervasive grammar-translation methods than to develop serious research designs and experimental testing measures.

Nevertheless, complaints about testing are surfacing. A significant case of such a reevaluation of traditional testing procedures in EFL is reported in Bancila and Chitoran (1972). In their description of the English university entrance examination given at Bucharest in July 1971 to 685 candidates, these two members of the examining committee severely criticize the widespread use of translation and "literary appreciation" of texts in high schools to the detriment of students' learning how to use English in natural, communicative situations. Bancila and Chitoran, who is Professor of English and Dean of the Faculty of Germanic Languages at the University of Bucharest, conclude from the types of errors candidates committed during the examination that methods of teaching and testing English in pre-university classes must be changed.

Interestingly, along with their critique of the candidates' preparation in English, Bancila and Chitoran give the most detailed description available in the literature of the protocol and types of questions used in EFL testing in Romania:

> The written part of the examination consisted of two parts:
>
> 1. the consideration of a chosen composition topic;
>
> 2. the translation from Romanian into English of 12 sentences and statements.

The oral examination consisted of three parts:

1. reading and translation of an excerpt from one of the selections contained in the textbooks for the 11th and 12th grades identified in the Program of Studies for the Admissions Examinations ; lexical and grammatical analysis of some words or underlined passages in the text.

2. the transaltion from Romanian into English of two or three short sentences.

3. discussion of a literary topic connected with the authors and works mentioned in the Admissions Program.

Although their discussion does not specify it, anyone familiar with Romanian university entrance examinations knows that as each student enters the examination room in turn, he draws his specific questions from a pool of question tickets on the table before the examining panel, and then he has fifteen or twenty minutes to prepare his oral responses at the back of the room while the candidate before him is being examined. The pool of questions contains items of varying difficulty, written by different members of the examining panel, on a wide range of topics based on the announced chapters of standard high school English textbooks. These announcements are publicized through the Entrance Examinations Catalogue published annually by the Ministry of Education (Ministerul Invatamintului, 1971, pp. 205-206 specify the material to be covered for English in the July 1971 sessions at all Romanian universities).

The Bancila-Chitoran report also offers as an appendix a copy of the essay questions that were used and a full copy of the

Romanian sentences which were to be rendered into English:

Discuss one of the following topics:

-Symbols of liberty in 19th century English poetry.

-The real measure of man in a socialist society is his work and his respect for the working people.

The twelve Romanian sentences for translation represent typical structural and lexical problems for Romanian learners of English, but they do not form a coherent paragraph. Furthermore, several of them are drawn from the standard treasury of grammar-translation sentences that are often used as syntactic and semantic mazes in EFL classroom instruction.

In a word, then, while the few objective tests experimented with in Romanian EFL settings contain serious flaws in construction and assumptions, traditional essay examinations also continue to be questionable as valid, reliable measures of student performance in English, except in isolated experiments.

VII. An American Experiment with an Objective Test of EFL in Romania

An intensifying national debate over the nature and adequacy of traditional evaluation procedures manifested itself in a significant conference on university entrance examinations held at the University of Cluj-Napoca on 7 December 1974. Reporting on the events at the conference, Constantin (1975) notes that the pedagogical specialists in attendance discussed at length the adoption of objective standardized tests to replace the usual oral examination and written paper used to select from among the best candidates those who were to fill the limited classes in each discipline.

After consideration of theoretical and practical issues regarding objective tests (e.g., Could such tests be more reliable than traditional examinations as measures of overall proficiency and aptitude? Were entrance examinations of any sort redundant with the baccalaureate examination at the end of the lyceum? Would it be possible to duplicate objective tests in sufficient numbers?), the conferees generally agreed to urge "the judicious use of standardized tests, but only when conditions were most favorable." (p.58) They also recommended careful research in the development of tests which would enhance the selection of candidates for university study.

In January 1975, in the wake of this conference on testing, I arrived at the University of Cluj-Napoca with three of my students from Stockton State College, Pomona, New Jersey, having been invited by the Rector of the University to organize a joint American-Romanian TEFL team which would develop a set of visual aids for use in teaching English in Romania.

At our first audience with him, the Rector asked us to administer an objective standardized test of EFL which had been produced in America to students who were majoring in English at the university. He had heard that such American-style tests were often used to determine if applicants to higher education in the United States were prepared for admission, and he wished to see if these tests would be helpful in the Romanian situation. He volunteered the full cooperation of the university.

As we later discovered, members of the University English Department were not as sanguine about the project since, it appeared, they resented being told by the Rector without consultation that foreigners--native English-speaking ones at that--would be testing their students. Perhaps a portion of the indifference we met was caused by fear that students deemed well-prepared in English by the Department might do poorly on the test.

Our explanation of the purpose of the test, its limitations, and the format of administration, delivered at a meeting of the English Department, received a cool welcome. Nevertheless, each faculty member wanted a personal copy of the test. When we explained that we had just enough copies for the testing and that customary security precautions prohibited a wide distribution of test copies, there was even less interest in the experiment among some high ranking members of the Department.[2]

With the aid of the Dean of the Faculty of Philology, we selected two groups to test, all freshman and junior English majors, and we also received approval from the County Inspector of Schools

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[2] One of our secret concerns was that it is not uncommon for some Romanian instructors out of the best of motives to share examination questions with favorite students before evaluation sessions so they can do well. We feared that no reliable conclusions could be drawn from the experiment if security were breached. What we lost in cooperation from some, we gained from others recognizing, perhaps for the first time, that an objective test must be reliably administered.

to test a group of 12th graders at a special English school in the city of Cluj.

A. The Subjects

A group of 43 twelfth grade pupils at Lyceum Nr. 1, "Ady-Sincai," was selected with about an equal number of subjects who were in the humanities (20 subjects) and science (23 subjects) tracks. Most were girls; only 7 of the total were boys.[3] All had spent three and a half years at "Ady-Sincai," where a native English-speaking British teacher had been teaching conversation sections to all the pupils for a year and a half as part of the usual courses in English, sciences and art (taught in English), and French (the second foreign language for all the subjects in the experiment). Lyceum Nr. 1 is a special English school (one of two in the country) in which many of the regular subject matter classes are taught in English. There are parallel French, Russian, and German special schools. Admission to all special schools is highly competitive. Twenty-five of the 43 subjects had studied English in school for 8 years, 7 for 5 years, 6 for 4 years, 3 for 7 years and 1 each for 6 years and 10 years. The maternal tongue of 37 of the pupils was Romanian, 5 Hungarian, and 1 Saxon German.

The group of 91 university freshman English majors included

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3 In Romania most language specialists are women since men are expected to enter a trade or science. Because it is a special English school, "Ady-Sincai's" enrollment is not typical of that of most Romanian high schools, but is representative of the female/male distribution of groups which major in English.

some who came from various high schools throughout Romania, but most were from the region of Transylvania. Forty-six had French as their academic minor, 16 Romanian, 11 German, 7 Hungarian, 6 Russian, and 5 did not identify their minor language. One subject had studied English for 14 years, 5 for 10 years, 10 for 9 years, 29 for 8 years, 2 for 7 years, 6 for 6 years, 14 for 5 years, 17 for 4 years, 3 for 3 years, 2 for only 2 years, and 2 did not indicate the time they had studied English formally. All but 12 of the freshmen subjects were female.

Of the university junior group of 67 subjects, 50 were first-language Romanian speakers, 13 had Hungarian as their maternal language, and 4 indicated that Saxon German was their first language. The academic minor language for 29 of the juniors was French, for 16 German, for 13 Romanian, for 5 Russian, and for 4 Hungarian. Among the subjects, 25 had studied English in school for 7 years, 12 for 11 years, 8 for 6 years, 7 for 8 years, 5 for 10 years, 4 for 9 years, 3 for 5 years, and 1 each for 14, 12, and 3 years. There were 10 male students in the experimental group.

B. The Instruments

Form B (Revised 1965) of the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) was selected mainly for the following reasons: (1) It is a standardized objective test with a respectable reliability coefficient (Spearman-Brown: .965 and Kuder-Richardson:

.894), Standard Error of Measurement (S-B: 3.35 and K-R: 3.54), and mean raw scores when administered to two norming groups (M = 75.35, on a group of 150 applicants to American universities, and M = 81.44, on a group of 100 recommended applicants to American universities). (2) It has reasonable content and construct validity, as described in the Manual accompanying the test, and contains objectively scored items on grammar (40 multiple-choice, short context questions), vocabulary (40 multiple-choice substitution and selection or fill-in-the-blank items), and reading (four 200-word paragraphs followed by five multiple-choice items that can be answered correctly only if the subject has understood the paragraphs.)(3) The test Manual provides for the grouping of subjects by equated scores on predictive norms established by the University of Michigan for admitting foreign students into restricted or unrestricted curricular sequences. (4) The test fit the available time in the Romanian schedule of classes, and sufficient test materials were available for the size of the groups to be tested.

Because it seemed desirable to test the subjects' listening comprehension and because the MTELP does not contain an aural comprehension subtest, the first part (20 items) of the 1972 edition of the Michigan English Placement Test (MPT) was selected. Furthermore, since the MPT is a non-diagnostic, objectively scored test designed for quick placement of non-native English speaking students into homogeneous ability groups, it was decided to keep the scores

earned on the MPT separate from those earned on the MTELP, and to use the MPT scores as very rough indicators of the aural comprehension ability of the total test population. The fact that the MPT containes only 20 items on listening and has not been normed added weight to this decision. The longer and normed Michigan Test of Aural Comprehension, Form A, was considered for use but rejected since the time alloted for test sessions was only two hours. The listening items on the MPT are of two types: questions that require selection of an appropriate reply from three choices and statements for which a suitable paraphrase has to be selected from three choices.

C. The Test Administration and Scoring

Each subject was give a personal copy of the sample questions and answer sheet that accompanies the MTELP in order to familiarize herself with the format of the test. With the approval of the Chairwoman of the English Department and senior professors, instructors who were greatly interested in the experiment went over the sample question and answer sheet with seminar-size groups of subjects (about 20 persons) two days before the administration of the tests. In the high school similar familiarization sessions were held by the English teachers. All those who conducted these sessions had themselves had an earlier familiarization session with the American members of the experiment.

The three test groups were administered the tests under as nearly

similar conditions as possible on three separate dates: University freshmen were tested on 31 January 1975, University juniors on 6 February 1975, and high school seniors on 10 February 1975. During the testing special care was taken to prevent cheating (a customary habit among some students that Romanian teachers tend to overlook) by having the two American Fulbright lecturers in the English Department assist in the proctoring along with the few Romanian faculty members who came. Also, a tests and measurements Romanian specialist from the University's Psychology Department introduced the test procedure in Romanian to ensure that everyone understood what was to be done.

The MPT was administered first according to the precise directions in the test Manual. Some ranking members of the English Department had objected to my plan to give the oral cues myself on the grounds that the students' ears were not accustomed to my native pronunciation of American English, but I decided the objection was not substantial since university English students at Cluj had had exposure to native-speaking American Fulbright lecturers since 1970. In contrast, the teachers at the high school were eager for me to speak the cues since they felt that their pupils should be able to understand a native, having taken conversation classes with the British teacher and having listened to American voices on audio tapes in classes.

The scoring of the answer sheets was done immediately after each of the three administrations. A team of graders composed of

senior psychology majors who had studied testing theory was hand-picked for dependability and concern for professional confidence by the university psychologist who helped administer the tests. I personally supervised the scoring.

Preliminary analysis of the test results was done on a Romanian computer program (FELIX C-256), but because more elaborate use of computer facilities in Romania was unauthorized (computer centers are carefully guarded), these preliminary calculations were check in the United States on programs in SPSS (Nie 1975); statistics calculated by hand have been based on Payne (1968).

D. Discussion of the Results

The Spearman-Brown split half reliability coefficient was computed on the obtained data for the 100-item MTELP and the results are as follows: r = .813, with a SE_{meas} of 3.59; raw total mean = 75.53. with a SD of 9.93 and N of 201.

For the 20-item MPT Listening Subtest, r = .546, SE_{meas} = 1.68, the raw total mean = 15.67, with a SD of 2.57 and N of 201.

The low r for the MPT Subtest was expected and suggests that no great confidence can be placed in the Subtest results. While a higher r for the MTELP would be desirable, we can still use the test results with a relatively high degree of confidence since "most reliability coefficients over .70 are probably within an acceptable range." (Payne 1968, p. 136)

Table 1 (at back) displays statistics on test results by class level and by subtest, raw total, and equated total scores. Equated scores represent raw total scores transformed to be equivalent to marks earned on Form A of the MTELP and on Form A of the Michigan Test of Aural Comprehension by a norming group of 234 foreign students at the University of Kansas and the University of Michigan in 1961.

Tests run on the between-level differences on subtest scores made by the Romanian test popluation reveal no significant differences except between mean reading scores earned by the 12th Graders and the University Juniors (Table 1, Column D). Significance level = .05 (Buchanan 1974, pp. 95-97). As a result, for all practical purposes the data yielded by the three test groups can be considered together since the Standard Error of Measurement of the test instrument can account for variance between observed and true scores. SE_{meas} = 3.35. Thus, the part scores and standard deviations for the entire test population might be respresented as in the following Table:

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for All Groups

N = 201

Section of the MTELP and MPT	Items	Mean Score	SD
MTELP Grammar Subtest	40	33.78	3.84
MTELP Vocabulary Subtest	40	29.25	4.19
MTELP Reading Subtest	20	12.55	3.93
MTELP Raw Total	100	75.53	9.93
MTELP Equated Total	100	80.14	8.63
MPT Listening Subtest	20	15.67	2.57

Table 2

The SD noted in each cell of Table 1 suggests the spread of the scores away from the mean for each grade level. A smaller SD represents a tighter clustering of scores about the mean. One might expect the scores of more advanced students to gather nearer the mean, as weaker students either improve or drop out, and, in fact, observation shows this to be so in most cases. The fact that the SD for University Freshmen sometimes is larger than the equivalent SD for 12th Graders in high school (hence a broader spread of scores among the University group), might be understood as a result of a more heterogeneous grouping of University Freshmen, most of whom had not studied in special English schools like "Ady-Sincai."

Table 3 displays Pearson correlation coefficients for part and total scores on the tests. Among the subtest scores of the MTELP the strongest correlation occurs, as one might expect, between vocabulary and reading scores: r = .5897. Overall, the correlations among part-scores of the MTELP are all substantial or marked and indicate that each part is functioning to measure different English-language abilities in the test population. The strongest relationship between any single part-score on the MTELP and the MPT Listening Comprehension Subtest involves the Grammar section of the MTELP: r = .3129. This coefficient suggests a slight relationship between what the two subtests are measuring, yet as we said above, because of the low reliability of the 20-item Listening Subtest this correlation cannot be trusted.

Finally, Table 4 interprets the MTELP equated total scores by class using the English language proficiency norms developed at the University of Michigan over many years. (MPT Listening scores do not have a bearing here.) Because the MTELP is not a test of students' achievement in a particular course of studies but a general estimate of English language proficiency, the equated total scores can be used as guides to a student's ability to pursue academic work at an American university. The proficiency norms developed at Michigan, where large numbers of non-native speakers of English have studied, serve the function of distinguishing the level of English proficiency a student needs in order to have a reasonable chance of success in different academic programs in an American university. The recommendations by degree programs in Table 4 are based on the relationship between academic performance by the norming group during the first semester of study and their scores on the Michigan battery. Table 4 shows the number and percentage of the Romanian subjects by class who scored in each recommended range for the three American curricular levels: Group I: Undergraduates in liberal arts and education. Group II: Graduates and undergraduates in engineering, mathematics and scientific fields that depend heavily on laboratory work. Group III: Graduate humanities and social sciences (English and American literature, law, political science, philosophy, etc.). As one might anticipate, a higher percentage of university juniors would be considered for acceptance by most schools at the University of Michigan than of university freshmen, and a higher percentage of university freshmen than of high school 12th graders.

E. Interpretations and Conclusions

One of the most interesting facts surfacing from the data provided by the tests taken by the 201 Romanians is that there is no significant difference in the quality of performance on the tests by university English majors and by high school 12th graders who have studied for four years in a special English school.

At first glance this fact might suggest that little or no progress in English proficiency occurs during university training. However, when one remembers that the pupils in "Ady-Sincai" were receiving special language treatment--a curriculum in which English is the language of instruction for many subject-matter courses as well as in the conversation course taught by a native speaker of English--and when one further recalls that most university English majors had not attended such a special English school prior to matriculation, it seems that the university students were able to reach through their training the level of proficiency achieved in the special English school, or conversely, that the experiences of English training in a special school like "Ady-Sincai" is of university caliber.

If the MTELP were administered to another group of English pupils who were comparable to the "Ady-Sincai" pupils in every respect except that they were not in a special English school (and/or to an entering class of university English majors), and if a parallel form of the MTELP were administered to the original 91 University Freshman subjects before they graduate in June 1978,

this hypothesis could be checked.

Finally, in their pursuit of more reliable measures in testing, Romanian researchers might focus on the degree of proficiency in English of pupils in special schools as opposed to that of pupils in schools following more traditional programs. If repeated objective testing reveals one group to be significantly better prepared than the other, the adoption of standarized evaluation measures could have an important effect not only upon the university entrance examination but also upon day-to-day classroom practice.

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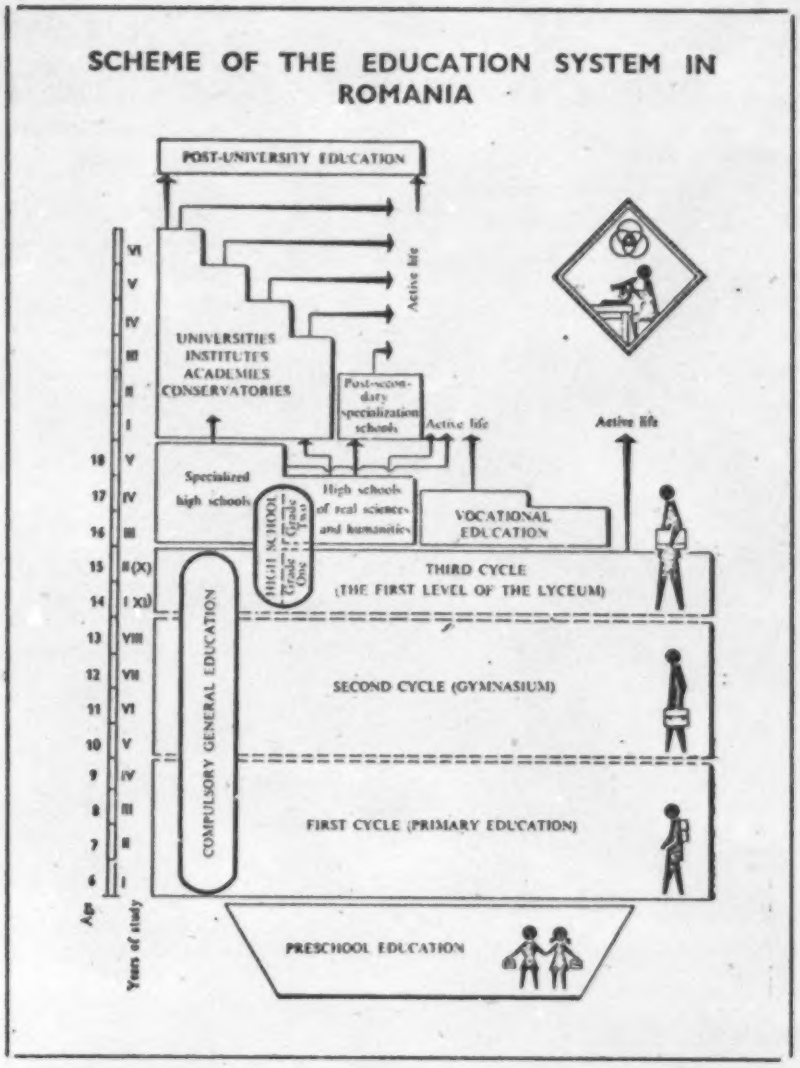

Figure 1

Source: Ministry of Education of the Romanian Socialist Republic. 1973 Education in the Socialist Republic of Romania. Bucharest: Institute of Pedigogical Sciences, p. 13.

Mean Scores and Academic History Data of 201 Romanian Students of English Who Were Administered Michigan English Language Proficiency/Placement Tests in Cluj-Napoca in January-February 1975

N and Class[1]	Col. A[2] Mean Listening Comprehension Subtest Score (20 items)	Col. B Mean Grammar Subtest Score (40 items)	Col. C Mean Vocabulary Subtest Score (40 items)	Col. D Mean Reading Comprehension Subtest Score (20 items)	Col. E[3] Mean Raw Total of Cols. B, C, D (100 items)	Col. F[3] Mean Equated Score of Cols. B, C, D (100 items)	Col. G Mean No. Years Studied English	Col. H[4] Mean High School Average in English	Col. I[5] Mean University Average in English
43 12th Graders	16.35 (S.D. = 2.98) Min. score = 7 Max. score = 20	32.84 (S.D. = 4.02) Min. score = 21 Max. score = 39	28.23 (S.D. = 3.39) Min. score = 21 Max. score = 37	9.72 (S.D. = 4.65) Min. score = 0 Max. score = 18	70.84 (S.D. = 9.75) Min. score = 49 Max. score = 92	75.86 (S.D. = 8.76) Min. score = 56 Max. score = 94	6.88 (43 cases)	7.44 (43 cases)	
91 University Freshmen	15.68 (S.D. = 2.35) Min. score = 9 Max. score = 20	33.57 (S.D. = 4.20) Min. score = 11 Max. score = 40	28.84 (S.D. = 4.78) Min. score = 9 Max. score = 37	12.42 (S.D. = 3.58) Min. score = 2 Max. score = 20	74.82 (S.D. = 10.54) Min. score = 24 Max. score = 95	79.63 (S.D. = 9.20) Min. score = 33 Max. score = 96	6.60 (89 cases)	9.13 (86 cases)	7.14 (86 cases)
67 University Juniors	15.24 (S.D. = 2.51) Min. score = 7 Max. score = 20	34.63 (S.D. = 2.98) Min. score = 24 Max. score = 40	30.46 (S.D. = 3.53) Min. score = 19 Max. score = 39	14.55 (S.D. = 2.49) Min. score = 2 Max. score = 19	79.36 (S.D. = 7.57) Min. score = 45 Max. score = 94	83.45 (S.D. = 6.20) Min. score = 53 Max. score = 95	8.08 (67 cases)	9.22 (55 cases)	8.50 (67 cases)

TABLE 1

N.B.: Notes occur on the next page.

Notes to Table 1

[1] 12th Graders were from Lyceum Nr. 1, "Ady-Şincai" in Cluj, Romania. University students were all English majors at the University of Cluj, "Babeş-Bolyai," Faculty of Philology.

[2] This portion of the test battery was taken from the 1972 edition of the Michigan English Placement Test by Mary Spoon et al.

[3] Subtests on Grammar, Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension together form the entire battery entitled the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency, Form B (Revised, 1965), by John Upshur et al.

[4] Romanian grades range on a scale of 1 (the lowest) to 10 (the highest). Five is considered the minimum passing mark. The mean high school averages for the two university student groups were compiled from records of complete high school transcripts on file in the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Philology, "Babeş-Bolyai" University. The mean average for the 12th Graders was based on the Fall 1974 semester grade in English, the only mark on file in the records of the Director of Lyceum Nr. 1, "Ady-Şincai."

[5] This mean was based on the cumulative record in English for each student. Thus, the mean for Juniors covers the work in English studies over 2½ years while that for Freshmen is the earned mark on work for only the first semester of English. Again, 10 is the highest mark a student can receive; 5 is a minimum passing score.

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Part, Total Raw, and Total Equated Scores on the MTELP and on the Listening Comprehension Subtest of the MPT for Cluj Subjects

N = 201

Section on the MTELP and MPT	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) MTELP Grammar (40 items)	1.00	.5367	.4997	.8084	.8127	.3129
(2) MTELP Vocabulary (40 items)		1.00	.5897	.8527	.8417	.1922*
(3) MTELP Reading (20 items)			1.00	.8342	.8258	.2842
(4) MTELP Raw Total (100 items)				1.00	.9936	.3105
(5) MTELP Equated Total (100 items)					1.00	.3018
(6) MPT Listening Comprehension (20 items)						1.00

p = .001 unless otherwise noted
*p = .006

Table 3

Romanian 12th Graders N = 43		Romanian University Freshmen N = 91		Romanian University Juniors N = 67		Michigan Norms and Proficiency Recommendations for Interpreting Equated Scores on the MTELP by Type of American University Curriculum to be Followed
Students	% of N	Students	% of N	Students	% of N	
						Group I: Undergraduates in liberal arts and education.
0	-	1	1.1%	0	-	**96-100** Can compete with native speakers of English on equal or nearly equal terms. No restrictions need be placed on elections.
1	2.3%	4	4.4%	10	14.9%	**90-95** Proficient enough in English to carry a full-time academic program. Some allowance may have to be made for written work and for heavy reading assignments.
6	14.0%	25	27.5%	20	29.9%	**85-89** May take up to 3/4 the normal academic load plus a special course (4 hrs. per week) in English as a foreign language.
10	23.3%	19	20.8%	22	32.8%	**80-84** May take up to 1/2 the normal academic load plus a special course (4 hrs. per week) in English as a foreign language.
16	37.2%	32	35.2%	14	20.9%	**70-79** May take from 1/4 to 1/3 the normal academic load plus a special intensive course (10 hrs. per week, non-credit) in English as a foreign language.
10	23.3%	10	11.0%	1	1.5%	**69 and below** Not proficient enough in English to take any academic work.
						Group II: Graduates and undergraduates in engineering, mathematics and scientific fields that depend heavily on laboratory work.
0	-	1	1.0%	0		**96-100** Can compete with native speakers of English on equal or nearly equal terms. No restrictions need be placed on elections.
7	16.3%	29	31.9%	30	44.8%	**85-95** Proficient enough in English to carry a full-time academic program. Some allowance will have to be made for written work and for heavy reading assignments.
10	23.2%	19	20.9%	22	32.8%	**80-84** May take up to 3/4 the normal academic load plus a special course (4 hrs. per week) in English as a foreign language.
22	51.2%	36	39.6%	14	20.9%	**65-79** May take up to 1/2 the normal academic load plus a special intensive course (10 hrs. per week) non-credit, in English as a foreign language.
4	9.3%	6	6.6%	1	1.5%	**64 and below** Not proficient enough in English to take any academic work.
						Group III: Graduate humanities and social sciencies (English and American literature, law, political science, philosophy, etc.)
1	2.3%	4	4.4%	4	6.0%	**92-100** Can compete with native speakers of English on equal or nearly equal terms. No restrictions need be placed on elections. For students in the extreme lower end of this bracket some allowance may have to be made for written work and heavy reading assignments.
6	14.0%	26	28.5%	26	38.8%	**85-91** May take up to 3/4 the normal academic load plus a special course (4 hrs. per week) in English as a foreign language.
10	23.2%	19	20.9%	22	32.8%	**80-84** May take up to 1/2 the normal academic load plus a special course (4 hrs. per week) in English as a foreign language.
26	60.5%	42	46.2%	15	22.4%	**79 and below** Not proficient enough in English to take any academic work in these fields of study.

★ The dotted line marks the minimum score of acceptance by most schools at the University of Michigan.

Table 4